

to British ornithologists. But they will be pleased with the dainty figures and brilliant colours—in some cases, we may perhaps say, a little too brilliant.

Among the strange forms introduced to us we may call attention to the Sand-Partridge (*Ammoperdix heyi*), which is a purely desert species. This, as Mr. Whympers says, “is a most charming, lively little bird, bustling about. You rarely see it for long. Even in January it still keeps in coveys, running along in and out of the boulders, and very quick and agile.”

It was rather bold of Mr. Whympers to figure the Shoe-bill (*Balæniceps rex*) in a book on Egyptian birds, its true home being far away on the White Nile, but, at all events, we are given correct figures of its grotesque attitudes, taken from the specimens in the Zoological Gardens at Giza.

In concluding the author gives a list of the names of the Egyptian birds known to him—356 in all.

VIII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

WE have received the following letters, addressed “To the Editors of ‘The Ibis’” :—

SIRS,—I wish to bring to your notice that a short time ago, in dealing with my specimens of the Mediterranean Falcons (*Falco punicus* and its nearly allied forms), I quoted several books, amongst them the excellent work on the ‘Birds of Tunisia,’ by the well-known ornithologist Mr. Whitaker, who states that he did not include the Saker (*Hierofalco cherrug*) for Tunisia*.

Afterwards I recollected that amongst the numerous specimens of the Saker in my collection there was one that

* “I have never obtained or heard of the Saker Falcon having been met with in Tunisia, but it may occur there occasionally as a straggler, because examples of it are not unfrequently obtained in Italy, and specimens are to be found in most museums of any importance in that country” (Whitaker, B. of Tunisia, 1905, vol. ii. p. 138).

had been obtained in that country. On searching I found it at once. It is a young specimen which I got, through Mr. Blanc's kindness, about two years ago, and was labelled by him as a "Lanner," October 1907, from Djebel Batteria in North Tunisia.

Its description is as follows:—

Upper parts generally dark brown, some of the feathers slightly shaded with greyish and with pale rufous edges, which are more conspicuous on the feathers of shoulders, rump, and upper tail-coverts; quills dark brown, partly margined with buffy white towards the tip and barred with white on the inner webs; tail greyish brown, middle feathers almost uniform, the lateral ones marked with buffy-white oval spots on the outer web, which are rather more oval on the inner; head and nape buffy white, with blackish central streaks to the feathers; cheek-stripe brown, very conspicuous; chin white; under surface white, with numerous and broad stripes of dark brown, under wing-coverts brown in the centre of the feathers, with broad white margins; cere and legs pale blue-grey; iris brown.

Culmen 32 mm.; wing 390; tail 260; tarsus 60.

I have no doubt as to the identity of the bird, but, in the bibliography quoted, I was unable to find any information relative to the presence of the Saker in Tunisia.

I am, Sirs, yours &c.,

Ca' Oddo (Padua),
October 4th, 1909.

COUNT E. ARRIGONI DEGLI ODDI.

SIRS,—May I be permitted to offer a few remarks on Mr. J. A. Bucknill's interesting paper on the Ornithology of Cyprus in your last number?

The name of the collector who furnished the material for Herr A. Müller's paper in the Journ. f. Ornith. for 1870 (p. 385) is Herr Gustav Schröder. He is still living, but is no longer resident in Cyprus (p. 576).

Mr. Bucknill is mistaken in supposing that the eggs of *Sylvia melanothorax* are still unknown, for Glaszner sent at

least two clutches of the eggs of this species, taken in 1906, to the Tring Museum, where I have examined them (p. 598).

The local race of the Tree-Creeper was not described by Dr. Hartert as a subspecies of *C. familiaris*, but under the name of *C. brachydactyla dorotheæ* (not *dorothea*) in the Bull. B. O. C. xiv. p. 50. The Asia Minor form is also a local race of the same species (p. 605).

Mr. Bucknill's supposition that *Motacilla ficedula* of Sibthorp is identical with the British Pied Wagtail is quite untenable. In the first place, Sibthorp's observations were made in 1787 and published in 1818, while the first attempt to describe *M. lugubris* was made by Temminck (who confused it with *M. lugens*) in 1820. Moreover, the British race is very unlikely to occur in Cyprus, as its ordinary migration-route does not come within a thousand miles of the island. One would naturally suppose "*Motacilla ficedula*" to refer to the Pied Flycatcher, but Mr. Bucknill includes that bird also among those identified by Sibthorp (p. 607).

Clifton Vicarage,
Ashburne, Derbyshire,
Nov. 20th, 1909.

Yours &c.,
F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

SIRS,—In 'The Ibis,' 1909, p. 705, when reviewing Part V. of my book 'Die Vögel der paläarktischen Fauna,' you have objected to my accepting the name *Sylvia borin* for the "Garden-Warbler" and that of *Sylvia hortensis* for the "Orphean Warbler," the latter having been used erroneously for about a century for the "Garden-Warbler."

It is generally acknowledged that we must use the oldest names for all birds, and that erroneously applied names must be changed. This is frequently done by ornithologists in all countries, when writing on foreign and less known birds, and everybody acquiesces in such a proceeding, but when the same practice is followed in the case of "one of our familiar birds," objection is raised. This is, however, inconsistent and unscientific, because the limit between a

familiar and an unfamiliar bird cannot be defined, and what is correct in one case must be right in the other.

However, about the necessity of correcting erroneous names commonly used for birds one might differ, and, knowing the views of the reviewer in 'The Ibis,' I should not have taken the pains to write this letter. But the reviewer makes erroneous statements and is therefore apt to mislead those readers who are not in a position to investigate such nomenclatorial questions themselves. The reviewer says that the identification of Boddaert's *Motacilla borin* is uncertain, and that the *Motacilla hortensis* of Gmelin "has been generally supposed to be the Garden-Warbler." These statements are wrong. The case is as follows:—

Motacilla hortensis Gmelin, Syst. Nat. i. 1, p. 955 (1789), is taken from Brisson's and Buffon's description and Daubenton's plate. The description of these authors and the plate of Daubenton shew unmistakably the Orphean Warbler; even Gmelin's abridged diagnosis leaves no doubt about this, especially his description of the tail with the *outer webs of the lateral rectrices white*, a character peculiar to the Orphean Warbler but not found in the Garden-Warbler. The habitat given by Gmelin is France and Italy! Latham and other ornithologists understood this very well, and Latham therefore called the English variety of the bird described by Buffon and Brisson (*i. e.* the Garden-Warbler) *Sylvia simplex*. Unfortunately, however, there is an older name for the Garden-Warbler, namely *Motacilla borin* of Boddaert. This name was given to the "Petite Fauvette" of Buffon and Brisson figured on the plate of Daubenton (Pl. Enl. 579), and referring undoubtedly to the "Garden-Warbler" as distinguished from the "Fauvette," *i. e.* the Orphean Warbler. Moreover, it has *not* generally been supposed that Gmelin's *Motacilla hortensis* is the Garden-Warbler. Seebohm (*cf.* Cat. B. Brit. Mus. v. pp. 11 and xiii) was very well aware of the facts, but he and other ornithologists took quite a singular and high-handed action in calling the Garden-Warbler "*Sylvia hortensis* Bechstein" instead of "*Sylvia hortensis* Gmelin," thus

disregarding the principal rule of every code of nomenclature, viz., that a name preoccupied in the same genus cannot be used again.

I think it is unfortunate that my reviewer did not investigate the points in question, but without regard to my careful statements charged me with accepting "uncertain names," a thing of which I disapprove as much as everybody else.

Tring,
November 1909.

Yours &c.,
ERNST HARTERT.

[We may venture to remark that, *in our opinion*, *Motacilla borin* of Boddaert, is an uncertain name. Dresser refers it (B. of Europe, ii. p. 383) to the Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*).—EDD.]

SIRS,—I wish to communicate to you the occurrence in Italy of an interesting bird.

On May 10th, 1909, I received from Dr. Cerio, along with other small birds, several Wheatears (*Saxicola*) that had been captured in the island of Capri in the Gulf of Naples. On examining these Wheatears "in the flesh" I was surprised to find amongst them an example of the Desert Wheatear (*Saxicola deserti*) of Rüppell. The specimen is a very fine adult male, in full plumage. It has been sent for examination to Count Arrigoni Degli Oddi, who fully confirms the correctness of my identification.

This is the third record of the occurrence of this "*rara avis*" in Italy. The first was obtained in Sicily in 1891, as recorded by Prof. Giglioli in his 'Avifauna Italica' (p. 130). This specimen is now in the Florence Museum. The second was suared on October 3rd, 1905, near Como in Lombardy (see Martorelli, Uccelli d'Italia, p. 530), and is now in the Museum of Milan; and the third is the present specimen, which is in my collection.

I am well aware that the Desert Wheatear has been obtained in other parts of the continent of Europe on about

six occasions, and, what is more surprising, in the British Islands and in Heligoland.

I am, Sirs, yours &c.

20 Via Pandolfina,
Florence, Italy.
November 17th, 1909.

CECILIA PICCHI.

Heel-pads on Young Birds.—It has been pointed out to us that the existence of heel-pads in certain species of birds that nest in hollow trees (see Günther, *Ibis*, 1890, p. 411, and Stonham, *Ibis*, 1909, p. 619) was well known to Nitzsch, who described and figured this curious structure in his ‘*Pterylographie*,’ p. 134. Taf. v. Nitzsch says (Engl. transl. p. 94):—

“In *Micropogon erythropygos* (i. e., *Trachyphonus margaritatus*) I found on the heel-joint a peculiar circlet of acute tubercles, such as I have also detected in young Wrynecks.”

These heel-pads have therefore now been detected in six species of two families, namely:—

PICIDÆ.

Iynx torquilla.
Gecinus viridis.
Dendrocopus macei.
Brachypternus aurantius.

CAPITONIDÆ.

Cyanops asiatica.
Trachyphonus margaritatus.

There can be little doubt, we think, that the use of this peculiar structure is to enable the young birds to ascend the smooth interior of the holes in the trees in which they are hatched. But it would be very desirable that the young of other birds that breed in hollow trees should be examined to ascertain whether they carry heel-pads or any similar organs, and we hope that some of our many correspondents in various parts of the world will turn their attention to this subject and let us know the result.—EDD.

The Lake-Ngami Expedition.—Letters received from Mr. Woosnam, dated October 1st, 1909, announce that the party was still on the banks of Lake Ngami, and was doing

well with the fishes of the lake (see 'Ibis,' 1909, p. 719). They had captured a young hippopotamus, and hoped to be able to bring it home. They were just proceeding to form a camp on an island some way out in the marshes in order to explore fresh ground. The birds had been up to that time rather disappointing; hardly any had been seen that had not been previously met with on the Molopo, and the Mopani forests had proved to be extraordinarily birdless.

The party expected to be leaving Lake Ngami about the middle of November, and to travel slowly down the Botletli, arriving home this month*.

The Museum Heineanum.—The celebrated collection of birds at Halberstadt, which was formed in the last century by the late Oberamtmann Ferdinand Heine and is known as the "Museum Heineanum," has been presented by Herr Amtrat F. Heine (the son of the founder) to the City of Halberstadt. The collection is well known from the catalogue of it prepared by Cabanis and Heine, which is constantly quoted by writers on ornithology; it is of great scientific value from the large number of typical specimens which it contains. A special building, adjoining the Civic Museum of Halberstadt, has been prepared for its reception, and the new "Museum Heineanum" was opened to the public with much ceremony on the 23rd of September last (*cf.* Orn. Monatsb., November 1909).

The Food of British Birds.—At the Meeting of the British Association at Dublin in 1908 a committee was appointed, on the recommendation of Sect. D, "to investigate the Feeding-habits of British Birds by a study of the contents of the crops and gizzards of both adults and nestlings, and by the collation of observational evidence, with the object

* Since this paragraph was written we regret to say that the expedition has come to an end, in consequence of the ill-health of Mr. Legge, who has returned to England. Mr. Woosnam proposed to remain in the Cape Colony for the present.